

## MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR.

Mr. N. A. Cravens, Private Secretary to the Governor, appeared at the bar of the House, and being duly announced, presented the following message from the Governor:

EXECUTIVE OFFICE,  
STATE OF TEXAS.

*To the Legislature:*

I return, without approval, House bill No. 9, which is amendatory of Article 3905, Chapter 7, Title LXXXVI, of the Revised Civil Statutes.

The bill under consideration extends the scholastic age of those who may be entitled to the benefits of the public free school fund, by one additional year.

The enrollment for the present scholastic year is 729,365 children, and it is estimated by the Superintendent of Public Instruction that, under the present law, of which the proposed bill is an amendment, and from natural cause, this number will be increased to at least 750,000 children for whom apportionment of the available school fund must be made in August next for the ensuing year.

He also estimates that should the pending bill become law there will result from it a further increase of fifty thousand children. My own opinion is that the latter increase will be fully seventy-five thousand, if not greater. This conclusion is reached by taking the enrollment of the present year as a basis of estimate and adding to it according to the generally accepted rules of mortality. An allotment of \$3,464,483.75, or \$4.75 per capita, was made by the State Board of Education from the available school fund for the present scholastic year, and it is not believed, after a most careful investigation, that a larger sum will be at the disposal of the Board for the coming year, if so much.

This being so, should the measure under consideration be enacted into law, it will necessarily follow that the school term for the next year will be much shorter than that of the present.

Section 3, Article 7, of the Constitution directs to be levied and collected an annual ad valorem State tax of such an amount, not to exceed twenty cents on the one hundred dollars valuation, as, with the available school fund arising from all other sources, will be sufficient to maintain and support the public free schools of this State for a period of not less than six months in each year.

The rate of the present ad valorem State tax for school purposes is eighteen cents on the one hundred dollars valuation.

Heretofore, unless perhaps during the present year, the scholastic term has not reached the minimum limit fixed by the Constitution.

The question, therefore, arises, would a policy be either wise or in keeping with the Constitution to enlarge the scholastic population, through legislative enactment, by not less than 75,000 children without an increase in the rate of ad valorem taxation?

It will be observed that under the present law the scholastic age is from eight to seventeen. If, however, it shall become from seven to seventeen years the result will most probably be that the more densely populated communities will derive the greater benefit—if benefit at all can accrue from such legislation. It must be borne in mind that the available school fund is distributed by the State Board of Education upon the basis of the scholastic population, as shown by the census returns, and that account is not taken of funds accruing from other sources to particular communities for school purposes.

Not only this, but it is a fact that must be admitted by all that conditions are far more favorable in cities and towns for the attendance at school of children of the minimum age than in the country.

Nor can I believe that it would be just to the teachers—the greater number of whom are now inadequately paid—to so largely increase the number of pupils without a corresponding increase of their salaries.

Almost all of the public schools are already overcrowded, and, as a rule, the teachers are taxed beyond their strength—especially in the cities and towns.

The support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools is a duty imposed upon the Legislature by the Constitution.

It cannot be successfully contended that the purpose of the bill, if accomplished, will successfully meet this requirement. On the contrary, it is believed, that it will have the contrary effect unless the available school fund be also increased.

For the reasons herein given the bill is returned to the Legislature for further consideration.

JOSEPH D. SAYERS,  
Governor.